

Government of United Arab Emirates

United Nations Development Programme

United Arab Emirates General Women's Union

**UAE National Gender Mainstreaming Initiative:
Capacity Building of the UAE's General Women's Union**

Brief description

This project's main objective is to build the capacity of the UAE General Women's Union (GWU), to enable the organisation to more effectively contribute to gender empowerment and sustainable development efforts in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Enhancing the GWU's capabilities, especially in the area of gender mainstreaming, will enable the organisation to successfully implement the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE, as well as effectively monitor and follow-up on commitments made by the UAE Government with regards to the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) as well as other relevant conventions and international agreements. This will be achieved through an extensive capacity building strategy that encompasses (i) capacity building of GWU through training in organizational skills; (ii) capacity building of GWU through sector-specific gender development training; (iii) gender sensitizing programmes targeting government and non-governmental agencies; (iv) partnership and exchange programmes between the GWU and government institutions.

Part I

I. Situation Analysis

A. The UAE General Women's Union (GWU)

The UAE General Women's Union (GWU) is the main women's organization in the country, primarily responsible for promotion of gender development and women's rights as well as lobbying the government for change of laws and policies that may discriminate against women. The GWU, chaired by the late UAE President's wife, Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak, is semi-autonomous in nature and fully supported and funded by the UAE government. The UAE Government has authorised GWU to take the leading role in gender development and gender equality issues in the country.

B. Project Justification

The UNDP's Arab Human Development Report listed women's empowerment as one of the three main deficits in the Arab World. The need to address this issue is gaining more and more urgency, particularly in the UAE's conservative, yet rapidly evolving society, where economic development and other aspects of human development are advancing rapidly while women's empowerment is lagging behind.

GWU needs to update its gender development programmes, streamline its activities and concentrate efforts on the establishment of a comprehensive gender mainstreaming programme for the UAE in order to effectively achieve its gender development objectives.

Given the limited number of women's NGOs in the UAE; and the UAE's recent accession to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in October 2004; GWU is also required to play a leading role in lobbying government to reform policies and laws in accordance with CEDAW articles. This project is aimed at building GWU's capacity in order for them to address such issues more efficiently.

C. Complementary Initiatives

This project will be in line with and facilitate implementation of the **National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE**. The Strategy was a joint UNIFEM, UNDP and GWU programme formulated in 2002, aimed at promoting women's decision making role in all sectors of society.

This project will also complement, and ensure success of, UNIFEM's regional **Arab Women Parliamentarians** (AWP) project, as the GWU is the main national partner for the UAE's participation in the AWP. AWP is aimed at facilitating the empowerment of current and future Arab women parliamentarians to act as agents of change through their transformative participation in the political process, and fostering an appropriate political climate to achieve gender equality in all aspects of national development. Building the capacity of the staff of GWU will improve GWU's efficiency to implement the AWP project for the UAE. Also, this project's activities include gender mainstreaming for public and private sectors in the UAE, improving women's participation in social and economic spheres as well as political spheres by lobbying for more engender policies of institutions and government.

D. UNDP-UAE

UNDP-UAE plays a central coordinating role for the UN agencies in the UAE and in this capacity has cooperated closely with UNIFEM on AWP initiative as well as on this proposed project. This project will also benefit from expertise of other relevant UN agencies as

appropriate (i.e. UNEP for gender and environment training, ILO for gender and employment issues, WHO for gender and health issues).

UNDP-UAE have a close partnership with GWU and have engaged GWU, as well as various UAE government officials, in a dialogue on the policy framework for national development of women in the UAE since the early 1990s. The outcome of this was outlined in the *National Strategy for the Advancement of Women in the UAE*, which was formulated based on the Beijing Platform for Action with clear targets and effective mechanisms that will enhance the development of women in the UAE and enhance their skills so as to participate in all sectors of society. Following the Strategy's launch in 2002, GWU and UNDP-UAE have been working together to translate the National Strategy into a complete action plan and programmes that will aim at empowering women in the UAE and enhancing their skills and abilities at all levels. In the midst of this effort, GWU requested UNDP-UAE's assistance in developing their capacity, not only to ensure successful implementation of the Strategy but also to meet additional responsibilities entrusted upon them recently by the UAE Government, such as coordinating CEDAW implementation and assisting the UAE achieve the MDGs. Following this initial request, a project proposal was drafted jointly by UNDP-UAE and GWU, in consultation with federal government and local authorities, namely the Emirates Institute of Diplomacy of the UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UAE Ministry of Education, Abu Dhabi's Environmental Research and Wildlife Development Agency (ERWDA) and the Abu Dhabi Department of Civil Service.

II. Strategy

This project's main strategy of implementation will be through an extensive capacity building action plan that encompasses:

- (i) Capacity building of GWU through training in organisational skills;
- (ii) Capacity building of GWU through sector-specific gender development training;
- (iii) Building capacity through gender sensitizing programmes targeting government and non-governmental agencies;
- (iv) Building capacity through partnership and staff exchange programmes between the GWU and government institutions.

The first and second component above will be conducted following a comprehensive needs assessment of the GWU Staff that assesses their development requirements in line with the country's gender development agenda. A central element of these two components is the training of trainer sessions that will be conducted for 3 GWU staff as well as 2 staff from other prominent women's associations. This will ensure sustainability of the project, as the new trained staff will in turn act as trainers to conduct all further gender related training required for the GWU staff as well as conduct training sessions for government and non-government officials with an aim to further develop gender mainstreaming in the country.

The third component above is crucial to ensuring positive gender mainstreaming initiatives throughout UAE society. This will allow the major government and non-governmental institutions in the UAE to become more aware of relevant gender related issues to facilitate the incorporation of a gender perspective in the creation of strategies for change as well as gain proficiency in how to engender programmes, regulations and activities within their organizations. Gender sensitizing sessions will be conducted to open dialogue with the main players in the country, specifically those organisations that are large enough and influential enough to have the most impact on society. These programmes will be carried out at three levels, firstly high-level sessions targeting Ministers and high ranking government officials will be held to attain commitment of decision makers. These sessions will discuss the importance of gender development and gender mainstreaming to the sustainable development of the UAE. Secondly, corresponding sessions will be conducted targeting middle management and human resource

officers. These sessions will focus on methods of promoting gender equality within an organisation – such as efficient hiring, development and retention of women employees – as well as an organisation's role in promoting gender empowerment within society. The third sessions will be similar to the second but target private sector companies mainly in the oil and gas and the banking and finance sectors.

The fourth component involves cooperation, exchange and attachment programmes between the GWU and government organisations. This will allow for joint collaboration efforts on gender development programmes as well as engendering government programmes and activities. To ensure sustainability of this part of the project it is proposed that upon completion of the project follow-up evaluations and 'gender-audits' will be conducted by the GWU to commend and recognize those government agencies that attributed most to gender development efforts in the country.

This project also comprises two scheduled major events that will be held around the celebration of International Women's Day in March of 2006 and 2007. In addition, there will be regular publishing of reports on the GWU's activities, which will be widely distributed throughout the country. Most of the project activities will be covered by the local media through appropriate methods (i.e. select media personnel invited to attend various open sessions as observers, press release sent from GWU or UNDP, television coverage of event). The media department of GWU will also be trained in the portrayal of women's image in the media and specific gender and communications issues, hence this department will play a key role in the publicity of the project's progress.

A. Project Outputs

- ◆ **200 GWU staff trained in gender development issues**, majority of which will specialise in 8 sector specific topics as follows:

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|------------------------------|---|
| 1) Gender and education | 6) Gender and legislation |
| 2) Gender and economy | 7) Gender and political participation and decision making |
| 3) Gender and the media | 8) Gender and environment |
| 4) Gender and social affairs | |
| 5) Gender and health | |

- ◆ **3 of GWU staff and 2 staff of prominent women's organisation qualified as trainers in gender mainstreaming (accreditation of qualifications through ILO, UNIFEM and/or UNDP)**

- ◆ **Improved gender equality policies within 10 Government organisations**

- ◆ **Senior officials of 12 UAE Federal Government Ministries gender sensitized, namely:**

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|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1) Ministry of Education | 7) Ministry of Justice |
| 2) Ministry of Labour | 8) Ministry of Economy |
| 3) Ministry of Foreign Affairs | 9) Ministry of Public Works |
| 4) Ministry of Health | 10) Ministry of Presidential Affairs |
| 5) Ministry of Social Affairs | 11) Ministry of Interior and |
| 6) Ministry of Cabinet Affairs | 12) Ministry of Finance & Industry |

(Alternatives for the above include the ministry of Higher Education, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Development, Federal Environmental Agency and the Ministry of Communications)

◆ **Officials of 10 UAE Government authorities gender sensitized, namely:**

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) Abu Dhabi Authority of Health | 6) Chambers of Commerce & Industry |
| 2) Dubai Authority of Health | 7) Ras Al Khaimah Invstm Authority |
| 3) Abu Dhabi Municipality | 8) Fujairah Municipality |
| 4) Dubai Municipality | 9) Abu Dhabi Environment Agency |
| 5) Sharjah Municipality | 10) Dept of Economic development |

(Alternatives for the above include the Abu Dhabi Water and Electricity Authority, the UAE Red Crescent Authority, Al Ain Municipality, Dubai Development and Investment Authority, and Umm Al Qaiwain Municipality)

◆ **Officials of 20 private companies gender sensitized.** The targeted sectors will be the oil and gas and the banking and finance sectors in the UAE.

◆ **GWU established regional and international network for cooperation in gender development efforts**

B. Expected Project Impact

◆ **Gender mainstreaming** of programmes and activities within major organisations throughout the UAE with the integration of gender equality policies in majority of institutions nation wide.

- ◆ UAE to lift reservations on **CEDAW**, specifically its reservation on article 2 of CEDAW
- ◆ Assist the UAE in meeting the **Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)**, specifically and directly **MDG 3** on promoting gender equality and empowering women, but also consequently to ensure UAE engender all other MDGs – a declared policy of UNDP
- ◆ Identify future potential entry points and interventions that will build on needs assessment and hence maximise the potential of any future development targets setting for women's empowerment

C. Risk Analysis

◆ **External Risk:** Obtaining full cooperation of government and private sector and possible resistance to change that may occur. The commitment of federal ministries, government authorities and the private sector to gender development is essential to the success of this project.

Probability: This is not likely to be forthcoming as in the past government officials, specifically the UAE's leadership, as well as the private sector, have shown tremendous commitment to gender development. Examples abound, and include among others: the leadership's appointment in 2004 of the first women minister as Minister of Economy and Planning; the annual Shell funded initiative on Emirates Businesswomen Award; the UAE Government's ratification of CEDAW in 2004; the affirmative action taken on inclusion of women in the Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry's elected Board of Directors; and perhaps the most striking evidence of the government's commitment to women's empowerment is the gradual significant increase in female university graduates that has led to a reverse gender gap in university graduates. Added to this is the fact that the GWU is Chaired by the wife of the late UAE President, and her leading role in gender development encourages other government bodies to promote gender development accordingly.

Impact: If this risk materialises, it will lessen the extent and outreach of gender mainstreaming throughout the country.

Management: The selected partners are regular partners of UNDP-UAE and have in the past expressed their commitment to gender development and the sustainable development of the UAE. In the case that one or more of these organisations fails to fully cooperate, the project has several suggested alternatives to replace them.

- ◆ *Internal Risks:* Retention of GWU's staff and GWU's long-term commitment to ensure sustainability of the project.

Probability: Retention of GWU staff and their long-term commitment is not likely to be an issue as most of GWU staff are loyal to the organisation and the mission of GWU, which is also evidenced by the low staff turnover over the years.

Impact: If GWU loses any of their staff they are most likely to move to government organisations where the success of the project is not severely affected, as they are likely to utilise the training received to engender other government organisations.

Management: This issue was discussed with GWU management that advised that they would be mitigating this risk internally. GWU will be ensuring good staff retention through amendments to their staff rules and regulations. This project also commences with UNDP-UAE providing GWU staff with information sessions on the details of this project; the benefit to staff, gender development and the country's sustainable development and; the expected positive changes of the project on their career development and gender empowerment in the UAE.

D. Project Cross Cutting Effects

This project will be cross cutting human rights and environmental concerns.

The project will increase awareness of women's rights and push for amendments to laws and legislation that may be discriminatory to women (particularly relating to personal status law, domestic violence, women trafficking). Assessment of human rights situation in the UAE and identifying key problems relating to women in the country will be detailed in the gender development needs assessment section of the project. Recent reports issued by Amnesty International, Freedom House and the International Labour Organisation cite human rights violations in the UAE are mostly against women, some noted concerns, among others, relate to female migrant workers, women trafficking, domestic violence and forced prostitution. Selected staff of GWU will be trained in laws and legislation with a focus on human rights. Gender sensitizing programmes that are planned for decision makers and legislators will also serve to increase awareness towards specific women's rights concerns.

The project will increase awareness on women's role in conservation of the environment and sustainable development via the establishment of a gender and environment department within GWU, in cooperation with Abu Dhabi's Environmental Agency. Abu Dhabi's Environmental Agency in collaboration with GWU and in line with the objectives of this project have also proposed the compilation and publication of a comprehensive document detailing Arab women's role in the environment to complement this project.

III. Management Arrangements

The project will be nationally executed and implemented by the GWU with management support provided by the UNDP-UAE. The UNDP office in the United Arab Emirates will liaise and coordinate with the GWU on implementation arrangements of the project as needed UNDP will be the disbursing agent through the National Execution (NEX) modality, whereby disbursements will be made by UNDP through direct payments and/ or through advances upon request of the GWU, for all project inputs.

Procurement will be in accordance with UNDP Procurement rules and regulations, which is in line with Section 3 of the UK/UNDP Framework Arrangement on Co-Financing and Technical Cooperation dated 19 March 2003, signed between the Government of the UK and the UNDP.

The project duration is 22 months and should be completed at the end of **December 2007**. The GWU will designate a *National Project Coordinator* who along with the *UNDP Project Manager* will be fully responsible for executing the project and completing all activities identified in the work plan. Both the GWU National Project Coordinator and the UNDP Project Manager will be members of the *Project Steering Committee*, which will be responsible for ensuring coordination, monitoring and timely completion of all project activities. The Steering Committee members will comprise representatives of the main project stakeholders, namely: GWU, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Economy, selected local government authorities and private companies. The committee members shall elect the Chair of the Steering Committee during the first meeting for a specified term decided on by the committee. The Project Steering Committee will meet at the end of each quarter, at the minimum, to assess the project status, specifically the project delivery and expenditure. The Committee will also consider any suggested amendments to the work plan of the next quarter.

The Results Framework and Annual Work Plan provide details of the activities and outputs over the project period. The Results Framework and Annual Work Plan may be subject to amendment and revision following consultations with all parties involved.

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Project will be subject to periodic meetings for follow-up on implementation upon the donor or the GWU's request.

UNDP-UAE will undertake monitoring activities throughout the duration and upon completion of the project, mainly through regular field visits to GWU, as well as the government agencies where some activities may be conducted. The donor will be advised of and invited to accompany UNDP-UAE on any of these visits. The purpose of the field visits will be to obtain views of a select target group and of the beneficiaries on how the project is affecting them and their recommendations for addressing relevant issues. Field visits will also allow UNDP-UAE to assess the adequacy of the project outputs in terms of quality and quantity vis-à-vis the expected results. A report will be prepared following the visit, highlighting beneficiaries' views as well as UNDP-UAE's observations and recommendations on how to address any issues concerning the project. A copy of this report will be submitted to GWU.

Furthermore, a Tripartite Review (TPR) will be conducted annually, at the least, by representatives of the GWU, UNDP and the donor. A terminal tripartite review (TTPR) held towards the end of the project implementation will also be conducted. UNDP-UAE will be responsible for organising tripartite reviews, in consultation with the UAE government and GWU. The National Project Coordinator shall prepare and submit a Project Performance Evaluation Report (PPER) for the TTPR Meeting.

V. Legal Context

The Project Document shall be the instrument referred to as such in Article (1) of the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA) between the **Government of the UAE** and the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP), signed on 19 January 1977. The host country-

implementing agent shall, for the purpose of the Standard Basic Agreement, refer to the Government Cooperating Agent described in the agreement.